

WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT OF TERRORISM
ON THE PORT OF LOS ANGELES
BY THE YEAR 2010?

Article

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This project on the potential impacts of terrorism on the Port of Los Angeles was completed for the State of California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Command College. It is an exploration of the potential futures of terrorist activity that may affect the Port of Los Angeles. The purpose is to raise the level of awareness regarding this issue and identify alternative possible future scenarios.

The current level of terrorist activity is on the rise, particularly in the Middle Eastern countries (United States Department of State, 2000). How significant is the threat of terrorist activity to the Port of Los Angeles? This project identifies potential future emerging trends and events that may affect the Port of Los Angeles and its Police Department's planning for potential terrorist activity.

Issue Statement

"What will be the impact of terrorism on the Port of Los Angeles by the year 2010?"

Environmental Scan

Founded in 1907, the Port of Los Angeles has long been a dominant gateway for international commerce. With the continual growth in the containerized shipping industry, the Port is poised to maintain this position well into the twenty-first century.

The Port of Los Angeles is ideally located to serve shippers and carriers requiring marine access. Currently, the Port of Los Angeles is the largest port by volume in the United States (Newton, 2000). It encompasses over 7,500 acres, including 28 major shipping facilities along thirty-five miles of waterfront and navigable waterways. The Port includes parts of the communities of San Pedro, Wilmington and a large portion of

Terminal Island, all of which are within the city of Los Angeles. The Port area is the termination point of three major freeways and several rail lines (see attached map).

The daytime population within the Port is in excess of seventy-five thousand. This figure decreases to approximately five thousand during the hours of darkness. This is subject to change with the arrival and trans-loading of a vessel's cargo. Currently the Port is involved in a major expansion plan that includes the addition of over five hundred acres of land that is being filled into the main channel. When completed, this will be the largest shipping terminal in the United States, generating several million dollars of income to the Port, the local, and national economies.

The Port has a thru put of over 450,000 twenty-foot containers per month (Zahniser, 2000). This amount of cargo has a major impact on the economy of the western United States. The Port has an impact on 259,000 jobs and 26 billion dollars in industry sales. This generates 1.4 billion in taxes for the local and national economies (Port of Los Angeles, 1998). The majority of the container traffic is generated from the Pacific Rim countries.

Threat Assessment

Although seaports represent an important component of the nation's transportation infrastructure, there is no indication that they are currently being targeted by terrorists. Terrorism is defined as the systematic use of terror as a means of coercion (Webster's, 1986). The F.B.I. considers the present threat of terrorist activity directed at any U.S. seaport to be low, even though their vulnerability to terrorist attack is high (United States Coast Guard Intelligence Coordination Center, 1999). This is a view that is not necessarily shared by the maritime community. The Maritime Security

Council publishes weekly bulletins on the threats to maritime security that demonstrate that the threat of terrorist activity has the ebb and flow of the tide.

The Port of Los Angeles is the leading Port on the West Coast for cruise ship passenger activity. Seaport passenger volumes have increased steadily over the past decade and this trend does not appear to be headed for change. With this increase comes an accompanying rise in non-resident crewmembers that represent a potential threat for terrorist activity. The unlimited access for both the foreign nationals and the goods that are shipped to them is of great concern.

Generally, cruise ships have focused on baggage inspection and passenger segregation. This system has substantially reduced the number of non-passengers having access to a ship. However, there is a major concern that cargo other than passenger baggage is not inspected. Another area of major concern is the lack of security systems that address waterside vessel access to ships. This could permit an incident similar to the situation in the U.S.S. Cole incident of October 12, 2000. This incident reflects the potential for extensive damage to a ship that may be inflicted from a waterside approach and attack.

The Navy has estimated that repairs to the Cole will take approximately one year and cost an estimated two hundred and forty million dollars to complete (Navy Office of Information, 2000). The loss in human life is not quantifiable, 17 sailors lost their lives, and an additional 39 were wounded. This damage resulted from two individuals approaching the vessel in an inflatable boat that contained an explosive device. This was a relatively small amount of explosives and not well placed structurally on the ship.

The formal board of inquiry found that there were several security measures that were not followed, however, they did not attach blame (CNN, 2001).

The threat to the Port of Los Angeles is magnified by the fact that it is a Military Mobilization facility for the west coast of the United States. There are several facilities designed for the loading of troops and supplies within the Port. Using a seaport for a military mobilization greatly increases the security stakes (United States Department of Transportation, 2000). An act of terrorism or sabotage can certainly harm the national defense capability, in addition to those working in the Port. The presence of military munitions and equipment could be a magnet for such acts.

In recent years there have been several terrorist acts committed in the maritime arena throughout the world as reported by the U.S. Department of State (2000). The incidents of Maritime piracy and terrorist activity directed towards seaports has been steadily increasing (Maritime Security Council, 2000). The United States Department of State reports this type of activity has been most evident in Africa, the Middle East, Indonesia, and the Philippine Islands (United States Department of State, 2000). The United States mainland has not been the target of any successful maritime terrorist acts with the exception of the World Trade Center bombing. Although not physically located within a seaport this facility is headquarters to the New York-New Jersey Port Authorities. It is unclear whether this act was directed at this facility due to its ties with the maritime industry. This act was that of an international terrorist faction.

There has also been the recent attack on the Naval vessel U.S.S. Cole in the Port of Yemen. It appears that the attack was at the direction of Usama Bin Ladin. Bin Ladin is currently living in exile in Afghanistan and it is believed he is directing terrorist

operations from there (National Commission on Terrorism, 2000). Many fanatic Middle-Eastern terrorist factions have focused their attention on the U.S. and its military stationed throughout the world. Bin Laden is believed to be both mastermind and financial backer for these operations.

There have been acts of domestic terrorism such as the Oklahoma Federal building, however; there have been no reported acts of domestic terrorism that focused on the maritime environment. As of this writing, there have been no known terrorist acts directed at the Port of Los Angeles or its Port customers.

FUTURES STUDY

This project was prepared utilizing the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) for futures forecasting. Individuals in various roles of leadership working in, or in conjunction with port security and port operations were interviewed to glean information regarding the concern for terrorism within the Port of Los Angeles.

The U.S. Coast Guard and the Los Angeles Port Police are severely under deployed and under funded to properly address the existing concerns. There is an existing Port security plan that all terminal operators and law enforcement agencies in the Port are to use as a guideline. This document is ten years old and is in desperate need of updating.

The Port Police and the U. S. Coast Guard have identified several of the troubling areas and have submitted them to the Interagency Commission on Crime and Security in U.S. Seaports. A report of the findings of that Commission has just been published (United States Department of Transportation, 2000). There have also been requests from several agencies that there be a more open sharing of

information and resources. The law enforcement community is neither fully exploiting the growing amount of information it collects during the course of terrorism investigations nor distributing that information effectively to analysts and policy makers (National Commission on Terrorism, 2000).

Currently the Port collects a fee for each passenger that cruises from the Port of Los Angeles. A portion of that fee was designated for port security at its inception. These funds need to be earmarked exclusively for the purpose of Port security. The Port of Los Angeles is the leading Port in the nation and as such is very profitable. Some of the funds generated need to be re-invested in Port security related functions. This is not the current situation as the annual budget for the Port Police has held steady for over fifteen years allowing for minimal cost of living adjustments in only some of the budget cycles. There has been no significant budget increase since 1977 after the “Sansinea” oil tanker fire. A budget increase can be achieved with minimal effort, as the Port has a surplus each year. Profits from the Port are required to be expended only on activities that promote the good of the port, commercial fishing, or the maritime commerce. These funds cannot be diverted into the general municipal fund of the City of Los Angeles (California State Tidelands Trust Act, 1911).

Given the above facts, the implementation of a Port security plan with sufficient resources would not be that difficult. It merely requires a change in mindset and core values focusing on Port security issues. This change is beginning to occur with the Port customers that are investing funds in the security of their facilities. There is still a substantial disagreement in the area of requiring

background investigations and fingerprinting prior to issuing credentials permitting private employees to access Port facilities. For this issue to be resolved it may take State and or Federal legislation similar to that enacted in Florida in 1998 (Miami-Dade county Code § 28a, 1998).

Project Summary

This project provides a glimpse into some potential futures for the Port of Los Angeles. The recommendations made are focused on potential problem areas to ensure an optimum or best-case scenario.

While the current threat level for terrorist activity in the Port is rated as low, the potential damage that could result from a terrorist act is substantial. Since this is the reality, there must be a strong stand taken to encourage and support anti-terrorist efforts. The laissez-faire method of management will only leave the Port of Los Angeles, and other seaports, vulnerable to both domestic and international acts of terrorism.

The City of Los Angeles has the busiest Port in the nation. There is a responsibility to ensure that it continues to operate at its highest potential. This responsibility flows not only to the citizens of Los Angeles but also to the nation as a whole as the Port's activities have a significant impact on the economy of our country. If the Port is to live up to these responsibilities they must dedicate adequate resources to ensure the continued safety and security of all their customers and facilities.

Recommendations for the Future

It is recommended that the funds designated for Port Security actually be spent for that purpose without diversion. It is also recommended that the Chief of the Port

Police establish quarterly meetings with the Coast Guard, F.B.I., and other concerned agencies to provide ongoing intelligence sharing and current threat assessments. The Port Police must take advantage of available anti-terrorist training and support the efforts of the international maritime community in providing this training to the entire spectrum of maritime security personnel. Finally, it is recommended that the Port expand its efforts to include commercial customers of the Port in some of the training activities that may be of benefit to their respective staffs.

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